

# **Improving HIV/AIDS Services Through a Network-based Health Information System**

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*RW CAREWare* is a free Microsoft Access®-based application developed and distributed by

the HIV/AIDS Bureau (HAB) in the Health Resources and Services Administration of the US Dept. of Health and Human Services. HAB administers the Ryan White CARE Act which, after Medicare/Medicaid, is the largest source of federal funding for HIV services in the US. The CARE Act provides grants to large cities affected by HIV (Title I), all states and territories (Title II), and directly to individual primary care providers (Titles III/IV).

CAREWare was developed to provide an easy-to-use, customizable and well-supported health information system that allows agencies to collect, analyze and report demographic and service information, and evaluate the quality of clinical care provided to their HIV-affected clients. The application is used across the US by primary outpatient care providers and a variety of social support service agencies that range in size from very small community-based organizations to large clinics running out of university-based facilities. In early 2004, HAB will release a wide area network/Internet-based version of CAREWare developed in the .NET® framework. Linking HIV providers through the Internet is expected to provide a number of benefits, including better real-time coordination and efficiency of services and referrals and, ultimately, improved clinical outcomes and reduced technical demands on end-users. For grantees hosting the data and business tiers, a centralized database readily lends itself to comprehensive health services analyses and reports required by funding agencies. Despite these benefits, a number of important issues must be addressed for computer-networking of HIV service providers to be accepted and successful. Most critical is acceptance by patients themselves, the assurance of privacy, confidentiality and overall security of the system, and demonstration of improved service outcomes. This presentation will demonstrate the main screens and functions of CAREWare, including the ability to generate a number of service and clinical outcome reports; produce lists of clients requiring specific follow-up for care and treatment; create custom fields; and produce longitudinal graphs of laboratory tests and medication regimens. The security features, data-sharing arrangements among network members, and flexibility of the .NET version will also be emphasized.